A Zine About Nothing

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I close my eyes and focus. What did I learn this week.

I read the Kai Cheng Thom article “Why are queers so mean to each other?” That I Google my ex to soothe myself, and that finding any results ends in suicide ideation. That this suicide ideation is a function of my trauma, which makes me see things in black and white. Hey I drive standard now, that’s pretty cool. Didn’t know how to do that six months ago. Focus. I realised that I was afraid to let go of my self-hate about my breakup because it meant that I might fail to internalize the lessons about how I needed to grow as a person. But now I keep going to this dark place because of it; and I realised that not letting go impacts my quality of life. I realized it’s better to continue as a perhaps more flawed but happier person than a miserable better one.

I open my eyes and look outside my window. It’s the brick of they alley my apartment faces. The retirement home on the other side is has been emptied and construction workers were throwing out walkers. I look back at the sheet of paper in my typewriter. I can’t think of anything to write for this play.

It’s set on a spacecraft with a minuscule living space, ten years in of a twenty year mission to the outer solar

system and back. In this not too distant future; there is no cryogenic sleeping and waking up years later. There is no Internet; only a very little data can go back and forth with hours of delays. The crew are stuck in the era of their departure.

The members of the expedition are processing living with the decision they made in their early twenties to go on this journey; and the regrets they have as thirty year olds fixed in time. The protagonist came out as trans during the expedition, and part of the story revolves around what being trans looks like when everyone in your environment accepts you as you are from the get-go. One of the crew members passes away from suicide years before the moment the play begins, and so there's also an exploration of mental health and grief. The commander is blind and the non-issue around her being so is an indictment of contemporary ableism.

Still I don't know what to write. I don't like that I conceptualized this play as being for cis audiences. Maybe it's best to shelve this idea for now. I go to my bed and pet the kitty I'm cat sitting.

I watch 1972's Solaris while eating a tub of ice cream. It is a slow film. My mind thinks about the email I got from my

pastor wanting me to remove the criticism about the church's sex and sex work shaming liturgy from my Pride edition of the prayers of the people I wrote. I tell myself my immediate desire to end my relationship with the church is BPD splitting. I don’t know if that’s true. I eat more ice cream.

There's that other story I had about the year after I had transitioned. When I lived in a basement bachelor apartment with the terrible landlord. I had intended to open it with a spanking scene and the apartment in boxes. Every chapter was a month, and every month finished with a gluten-free vegan recipe. I was into baking then. I wanted to skip all the trans coming out bullshit and focus on the tight knit community of radical anti-capitalist twenty something queers. I wanted to write about the beauty of having each other as support, before people started to move away, turn inwards to their monogamous partners, and work for non-profits. I wanted to write about my narcissistic mom and enabler abusive step-dad.

Making peace with how my parents treated me and getting over the loss of certain relationships had taken the therapeutic element out of the writing process for that story. I’m not just the person I was then. Yeah, that idea is also best left to the past.

Maybe being creative isn't my thing right now. But what is? I feel like I'm so exhausted these days after work. There’s not much else I could do that feels accessible.

I'm at the dyke march and I see the only two queer people in this city who trigger me. Trans women who shout threats of physical violence and make themselves the center of attention bring me instantly back to childhood with my towering step-dad. Last time I saw one of them at a community consultation I barely held it together only to spiral and self-injure after a friend wasn’t taking me seriously about how bad it was affecting me.

I look to my phone, surfing aimlessly on pages I don't really care about so that I don’t focus on them and reduce the likelihood of an interaction.

This is the first dyke march I come to as a participant. There's a trans flag posted. A far cry from my first pride a decade ago where the dyke march was all cis women led by a grey haired bunch in motorcycles. Now it has the protest vibe of the trans march but without the trans men. A twenty-five year old woman who has been here since

she was three and is being threatened with deportation speaks out. The Two Spirit MC reminds everyone that settlers are on stolen land, and who are we to say this woman and her family who have been here for decades are illegal.

The march begins with people chanting. It's fucking empowering and my heart is glowing. The white supremacists who harassed children and young families at the drag storytelling event last week are nowhere to be seen. Thank fuck.

I meet up with my date after the conclusion of the march. They're being cute and wearing their vest with all the buttons and a mash up trans symbol with a fist on the back. We talk about buttons from the 80's era and how little has changed. We chill by the bougie pool outside my building pointing out the Instagram influencer wannabes and bros and then go inside to watch Deadpool 2 as I make us popcorn on the stove.

I look at the pamphlet for "Fertility Consulting" I got from the community tables at Pride. The photos on their site look like of rich gay people; the kind who own a home. I

want to solo parent; I can barely afford my bachelor apartment downtown and car. I'll never qualify for this shit before I'm forty. Adoption seems even less within reach. Try affording a two bedroom apartment on your own in this town. But that's a requirement for adopting.

I guess this shit is only for cisgays with the kind of parents that paid their tuition, gave them their old car, gave them a down payment for their first house or let them live at home to save for one. The kind of cisgays that went to university and graduated into a job that paid them $60k/year.

My boss brings me into his office. I'm being told I'm perceived as being unhappy by his manager. It was because of the meeting yesterday, which strikes me as odd, as it was cordial and I barely said anything. His manager met our team and asked for feedback. I suggested having activities to break down the us vs. them mentality in the company as to help put an end to calling other teams lazy and incompetent.

It runs on the last time my boss brought me in. That time was because an executive complained about me posting

an article on the company chat about shifting away from a model that blames lone individuals for systemic failures to one oriented around putting measures to prevent repeats. My boss brought me into his office and pushed back rather forcefully using straw-man arguments. It was weird.

So now I've been labelled as having an attitude problem. These guys wouldn't last a minute in a queer community consultation.

I message my bestie about the encounter as its left me a little perturbed. He tells me to prod my manager for specifics and to tell them that I can't do all the emotional labour in a dialogue and that they'll need to work on how they choose to receive my words.

My date texts me that evening. They had a silly argument with their bestie. We go out for a late night walk and sit down by the dock. Our heads rest against each other as we watch the lights of the old railroad bridge dance in the still water. This night is perfect.

I leave work early to hang out with my bestie before his 3 - 11 pm shift. We walk and I see streets blocks away from

my place that I'd never noticed. Rich old homes that probably didn't look any different seventy years ago.

We stop by the Korean grocery store and grab a radish salad and chips. I grab some beer and get ID'd for the second time in as many days. I'm 34. Trans fountain of youth.

We watch a terrible horror movie. Not the kind that's so bad it's good. The kind that's just mediocre. There's an antagonist that's supposed to be creepy because she has a twisted spine. Ableism and shaming body diversity is rife in horror. So many movies rely on having those who look different be a source of discomfort for the able-bodied conventionally attractive protagonists.

If I was making a horror movie it wouldn't need the supernatural or jump scares. Real life is scary enough. The terrifying bits would be from going to the washroom of a bar with a bunch of bros commenting about how "a man" went into the ladies room. Or being yelled at in the change room as a pervert surrounded by other women. Or being followed in stores by the same police who beat you up last year for being sassy. Or being in a chair for laser hair removal by with an esthetician that turns out to be a transphobe. Or having a man get out of his truck and

walk towards you because you gave him the finger after he threw a mystery liquid at you. Or having a best friend overdose and go missing and it’s winter and you’re afraid he’s going to die in the snow. Or having a date send a jumbled text just like when they overdosed that one time and neither they nor their partner are not answering your phone calls. Or leading a workshop when right-wing provocateurs come in to harass people inside. Or being surrounded by bystanders who ignore your cries when a man grab your breasts to see if you’re really a woman. In my horror movie, the monsters are average looking cishets.

I'm reading the new Grease Bats. It reminds me of the comics Allison Bechdel would have written in the eighties. It's familiar. It’s comforting.

I close the tab and go back to debugging this code. I look around to my teammates who are all listening to music. I load up a playlist on Spotify. I am happy. My friends might be having mental health crises, but I'm good now - I don't go up and down with them. I am just like alright, you die you die. It doesn’t mean I love you any less, I just recognize what I can control and what I can’t. Here's what

I can offer you, and maybe your brain is doing this thing. I can't be the family you want or a parent that fixes everything. But I am the family you need.

It's so easy to get distracted from boring work. I load up a different playlist. Some Tribe 8 and Schmekel.

The Roomba is colliding with my chair as it goes off to clean the apartment. I'm about finished my Saturday morning routine: coffee, bread and home-made jam, cleaning the toilet (I really need to get to that grime between the floor tiles one day), laundry, shaving everything, doing my brows, a shower, watering the plants, dusting, taking care of the kitchen, washing the floors and brushing my teeth. I'm reading a Wired magazine that was being thrown out of work about a group of teenage hackers. It reminds me of another time. I text the friend who made the home-made jam. She messages back that she's at the rainbow youth camp she's running but that yes she will have more to sell.

A song about second puberty from a baby trans plays in the background. Some of the lyrics about pretending to be fifteen makes me think about the delayed adulthood thing.

In fifteen years I'll be fifty but it doesn't feel like I've achieved anywhere the level of markers of adulthood of the cishet folk in my life. They're having their second kid, are married, have owned a home for years, have had a car for a decade, and spend weekends at a cottage. Their instagram feeds never talk about anything emotions related, other than elation. Meanwhile the queer folk in my life all have significant mental health issues and are open about it. Very few make more than minimum wage. None have bought a house, very few own a car. I'm somewhere in between. I've given up on home ownership and marriage; but still want to find a way to have a kid before I'm 40.

Where are all the radical queers over 35 like in Dykes to Watch Out For who are in therapy but have some stability? Who have been out for decades? Who are partnered up for the home stretch? Have kids? Do they exist but have just turned inwards to their immediate friends and don't go to community things because they need to anymore?

I put on the corgis in space shirt with the sleeves I cut off to show off my sports bra and my "Stay Soft" hat from the punk flea market. I leave my home to plan a surprise

unbaby shower at the tea shop for my friend who just had her tubes tied.

Maybe I could make a board game about going through life as a radical queer. Pick up a card for a life event ("get a master's in library science", "you burnt out from social work") and relationship events ("your partner was awful at managing NRE"). The goal would be to finish the game having gotten to be the most human.

I think of this at a random punk show at the basement perogies place near where I just got shitfaced with my bestie. I recognize a few queer people from Instagram. The dudes who are playing are in another band with an acquaintance of mine. A queer tattoo artist is fixing the hair of the guitarist.

I leave to order poutine from the chip wagon next door. When I come back down there’s a new group. The lead is amab in a skirt. A drunk cishet chick grabs the leads skirt and shoves up the phone with the camera app open. She yells in the mic for the lead to show their balls. The lead replies they don't have any. Fuck this is worst than when bachelorettes show up at gay bars.

I feel unsafe around this drunk asshole chick. I want to check in on the vocalist but they are still playing. I go to the washroom. Two men follow me in assuming I walked into the men's.

I wake up with a hangover. I go to church because I had signed up for a reading and the pastor welcomes me by asking me if I want to give a sermon. I tell him yes. One of the church ladies texted me this might happen; she was upset that I had been censored at Pride and pushed the pastor. I get back home exhausted after and try to nap as terrible movies play in the background.

My bestie is messaging me about the weekend trip he's having with his other friend including going to a play party. I realize I feel jealous. That's my BDP. Making me feel unwanted in strong and secure relationships with people who love me unconditionally. I just ignore the feelings. They're a signal my brain developed from a very different environment.

I'm falling asleep but my date is messaging me the sexy things they want to do to me as they're having a late

lunch with their mom. I would love to see them squirm as I reply in kind; where they're trying to pretend like nothing is happening at this restaurant.

I get up after a long afternoon nap. I grab my laptop and go to the common area outside with a beer a friend gave me for lending her camping gear. None of the ideas I have stick, so I'm writing a zine about nothing in particular. Maybe that's something in itself.

I'm thinking of Colbert's words; that the most positive way to go through life is to regard existence as a gift, and to strive to be the most human. Not good, not bad, just the most human. Maybe my story just being about a slice of time where I just am. Perhaps it'll be honest enough to resonate with one or two people.

What did I learn this week. That I love myself. That I have a solid little network of folk who have my back. That my brain has been conditioned to jump to seeing myself as undesirable when met with certain signals but that this isn't reality.

I learned that sometimes I want to see what comes next.

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